

Chapter LVI

Situational Communication Apprehension Measure

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BACKGROUND

The situational communication apprehension measure (SCAM) was developed by McCroskey and Richmond (1982, 1985) to measure state communication apprehension in any context. This self-report instrument utilizes a 20-item questionnaire to assess how one person felt during a recent interaction with another. Richmond (1978) has also investigated a person's dispositional (trait) anxieties and fears associated with specific situations (state).

The SCAM, a Likert-type measure of state anxiety, asks survey takers to think about the last time they interacted with someone who held a supervisory role over them. Based on that interaction, respondents rate 20 statements—10 describing positive and 10 expressing negative feelings—on an accuracy scale of 1-7. A mark of “7” indicates the statement describing the situation is extremely accurate; a “1” notes the most inaccurate assessment of the interaction.

An individual's score on the SCAM is determined by summing all the positive statements and then summing all the negative statements. The two sums are then added and subtracted from 80. The

score should range between 20 and 140. A score below the lower limit or above the upper limit indicates the respondent has made an error.

Because scores on the SCAM are highly dependent on, and variable by, the particular situation, norms for score ranges, means, and standard deviations are hard to define. However, researchers generally accept a score between 39 to 65 as low, 66 to 91 as moderate, and 92 and above as high levels of apprehension.

RELIABILITY

Research supports that SCAM has a measure of high reliability. The alpha reliability of the SCAM ranges from .85 to .90.

VALIDITY

The validity of SCAM's construct and criterion has been supported. Because SCAM is a self-report instrument that gauges a person's apprehension during a recent communication event, validity of the measure increases the less time elapses

between the event and the completion of the survey. Scores on the SCAM have helped to assess people's apprehensions in interacting with those who have authority over them, such as a student's interaction with a teacher, an employee's dealings with a boss, or a patient's feeling while talking to a physician.

COMMENTS

Other instruments to measure communication apprehension include the personal report of communication apprehension (PRCA) (McCroskey, 1982). In comparison to SCAM, which measures state apprehension, the PRCA-24 measures trait communication anxiety.

The PRCA, the SCAM, and several demographic questions were administered to 323 non-traditional students (Poppenga & Prisbell, 1996). The study examined trait-like and situational communication apprehension for 212 female and 111 male undergraduate students enrolled in a two-year community college. The students were enrolled in general education requirements at a Mid-western community college. Of these students, 181 were 25 years or under, 142 were older; the mean age of the students was 26.9.

Results indicated a difference between student type and situational communication apprehension. Higher levels of apprehension were reported by the traditional students over nontraditional students.

LOCATION

The SCAM survey is online at <http://www.jamesc-mccroskey.com/measures/scam.htm>. The respondent can print out a hard copy of the measure and complete it on paper. Survey takers are provided with a short introduction regarding the survey's scope and intent. A set of directions explain that the

following survey intends to gauge how the survey taker felt "the last you interacted with someone who had a supervisory role over you."

For the 20 statements, the test taker is directed to rate responses 1 to 7: a 7 if the statement is "extremely accurate," 6 if "moderately accurate," 5 if "somewhat accurate," 4 if "neither accurate nor inaccurate," 3 if "somewhat accurate," 2 if "moderately accurate," and 1 if "extremely accurate." Respondents are encouraged to mark their answers quickly for the most accurate assessment of their interaction with the other person.

A three-step process for scoring the SCAM follows the completion of the survey.

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